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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/A ANTHONY RUSH AND EUR/RPM AARON COPE
AND RAPHAEL CARLAND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/03/2020
TAGS: AF FI MARR MASS MOPS PREL
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: FEW DETAILS ON FINLAND'S INCREASES,
PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT REAFFIRMED

REF: A. STATE 14366
¶B. HELSINKI 36
¶C. HELSINKI 21

Classified By: DCM Michael Butler, Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The details and exact duties of Finland's additional military and civilian personnel promised for Afghanistan (details reported in reftel B) are not yet available. MFA Afghanistan Envoy Kalkku responded to Charge's delivery of reftel A points by reiterating the GOF plan to fill its six empty EUPOL slots and to double its embassy in Kabul from three to six diplomats. However, Kalkku did relate that Finnish OMLT trainers would now be able to operate below the brigade-level. Parliament received the government's report on Afghanistan on February 18, which all parties hewing to their previous positions: the NCP and Centre strongly supporting increased efforts and the opposition SDP against sending more soldiers but recognizing the need to be engaged there. END SUMMARY.

FEW DETAILS ON ROLES OF MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL

¶2. (C) Charge raised reftel A points on February 19 with Finnish Special Envoy for Afghanistan Elina Kalkku. Kalkku related that the government's February 18 report to parliament on proposed increases in troops and trainers had been well-received. While she did not yet have line-by-line CJSOR information for the additional Finnish personnel, the additional half-dozen civilian police would top-up Finland's EUPOL contingent to 30. Finland's OMLT trainers would also be allowed to operate down to battalion-level, freeing them from the present limit of operating at brigade-level. Kalkku reiterated that the MFA was planning to double the size of its embassy in Kabul (Note: we understand there are about three diplomats there now who focus on development. End Note).

PREDICTABLE REACTION FROM PARLIAMENT TO GOV'T REPORT

¶3. (SBU) FM Stubb and DefMin Hakamies presented the government's report on Afghanistan at a sparsely-attended plenary session of parliament (about 20 representatives present out of 200) on February 18. Stubb emphasized that 36 of 43 ISAF participants were increasing their troop contributions, and that Finland's increase was a temporary measure (Note: GOF has not stated how long this "temporary increase" will last. End Note). According to Stubb, Afghanistan was becoming the primary focus for Finland's crisis management efforts with the expected drawdown of its forces in KFOR. Stubb reiterated Finland's justification for being involved in Afghanistan (maintaining regional security and stability, combating drugs and crime, and solidarity with

the international community) and was more specific about what had been achieved than on previous occasions. He lauded the increase in school attendance, especially among girls, and praised the wider provision of health care and the return of some 5 million Afghan refugees. Continuing challenges of Taliban violence and corruption in the GIROA needed to be addressed, but he assessed that the new Afghan cabinet was good overall and that the people generally supported ISAF and opposed the Taliban. Hakamies followed Stubb's presentation with an anecdote about his December 2009 visit to a girls' school while visiting Finnish troops in Mazar-e-Sharif. He went on to state that, while six months ago he thought ISAF "could win", now he thinks "we are winning".

¶4. (SBU) Representatives of each party followed the government's report with speeches of their own which largely tracked their established positions on Afghanistan. The NCP and Centre Party both emphasized the need for comprehensive crisis management to protect Finland's interests in peace and stability and to facilitate reconstruction and development. Both also underlined that Finland's policy was supported not just by the government but by the President and the parliament. Green Party MP Pekka Haavisto emphasized the lack of a military solution and that Finland was involved to support the Aghani government, as contrasted with the U.S., which had its own, different, motive for involvement as a result of 9/11. The opposition SDP took the theme of "no military solution" one step further, arguing that an increase in troops would not help matters. NCP and Centre representatives then criticized the SDP for failing to support the increases in military and civilian personnel despite the support of President Halonen, formerly of the SDP

but officially nonpartisan due to her office. The opposition Left Alliance and True Finns lambasted the presence of Finnish soldiers in Afghanistan, portraying the GOF as a puppet of the U.S. and NATO. The Left Alliance bizarrely alleged that the U.S. and NATO wanted Finland to be drawn into Afghanistan's civil war, while the True Finns accused the government of playing games with the lives of Finnish soldiers.

FIRST REACTION TO DUTCH GOV'T FALLING: NOT LIKELY HERE

¶5. (SBU) In the first public reaction to the fall of the Dutch government over its involvement in Afghanistan, Finance Minister and NCP Leader Katainen dismissed the idea that this could happen in Finland, citing the "very broad consensus" behind such decisions in Finland.
ORECK